

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (currently amended) A method for enhancing plant growth or yield, comprising ~~exposing soil to~~ treating soil with H_2 gas, and growing a plant in the soil.
2. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising combining the soil ~~exposed to~~ treated with H_2 with soil not ~~exposed to~~ treated with H_2 , and growing the plant in the thus combined soil.
3. (currently amended) The method of claim 2 wherein the amount of the combined soil which is the soil ~~exposed to~~ treated with H_2 is between about 5% and 100%, by volume.
4. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the soil ~~exposed to~~ treated with H_2 is combined with soil in which the plant is already growing.
5. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein a seed or plant is planted in soil not ~~exposed to~~ treated with H_2 adjacent a volume of the soil ~~exposed to~~ treated with H_2 .
6. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the soil ~~exposed to~~ treated with H_2 is soil in which the plant is already growing.
7. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the H_2 gas is generated by the electrolysis of water.
8. (original) The method of claim 7, wherein the H_2 gas is generated by providing an electrical current in the soil so as to generate H_2 directly within the soil.

9. (previously amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the H₂ gas is generated by microorganisms selected for their ability to evolve H₂.

10. (original) The method of claim 9, wherein the H₂ evolving microorganisms are also N₂ fixing microorganisms.

11. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the H₂ gas is provided by a legume selected for its ability to produce H₂ gas.

12. (original) The method of claim 11, wherein the legume has HUP- symbiotic nitrogen-fixing bacteria.

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13. (original) The method of claim 11, wherein the legume has inefficient nitrogen-fixing bacteria.

14. (original) The method of claim 11, wherein the legume has distributed nodulation.

15. (original) The method of claim 11, wherein the legume has an enhanced number of nodules.

16. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising placing the soil in a container that minimizes the diffusion of H₂ therefrom, and applying H₂ to the soil in the container.

17. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising covering the soil with a membrane having a low permeability to H₂, and providing H₂ below the membrane, wherein at least a portion of the ~~exposure~~ treatment of the soil ~~to~~ with H₂ occurs beneath the membrane.

18. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the H₂ gas is provided to the soil via tubing or hollow probes placed in the soil.

19. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said ~~exposure~~ treatment of soil to with H₂ enhances the ability of soil microorganisms to oxidize H₂; and

wherein said enhanced ability of the soil microorganisms potentiates enhanced growth or yield of a plant growing in said soil.

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20. (original) The method of claim 19, further comprising:

isolating the microorganisms, and

applying the microorganisms to soil, seeds, or plant roots;

wherein said application of microorganisms potentiates enhanced growth or yield of a plant.

21. (original) The method of claim 20, further comprising culturing said microorganisms and applying the microorganisms to soil, seeds, or plant roots.

22. (cancelled).

23. (cancelled).

24. (previously added) The method of claim 1, wherein the H₂ gas is generated by soil microorganisms.

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25. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising combining the soil ~~exposed to~~ treated with H₂ with soil not ~~exposed to~~ treated with H₂, and growing the plant in the thus combined soil, wherein the H₂ is generated by H₂ evolving microorganisms.

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Concluded

26. (new) The method of claim 1, wherein the concentration of H₂ gas is at least 50 times greater than the concentration of H₂ gas in air.

27. (new) The method of claim 26, wherein the concentration of H₂ gas provided is increased as treatment of soil progresses.
